

VZCZCXYZ0000  
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHUNV #0084/01 0570726  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 260726Z FEB 09  
FM USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9059  
INFO RUEHII/VIENNA IAEA POSTS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE 0141  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 1509  
RHEBAAA/DOE WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L UNVIE VIENNA 000084

SIPDIS

ISN/RA FOR NEPHEW AND DANIEL, IO/T FOR GOLDSTEIN, NEA FOR  
MONZ, CIA FOR HORIO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/25/2034  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [SY](#) [KN](#) [IAEA](#) [KNNP](#)  
SUBJECT: IAEA/SYRIA TECHNICAL BRIEFING: SYRIA REJECTS IAEA  
FINDINGS; SAFEGUARDS DEPARTMENT CALLS COOPERATION ESSENTIAL

REF: UNVIE 00071

Classified By: AMBASSADOR GREGORY L. SCHULTE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D  
)

-----  
Summary  
-----

11. (SBU) The IAEA's technical briefing on Syria, ahead of the March 2-6 Board of Governors meeting, reviewed the Agency's case for concerns of a nuclear reactor under construction at the Al-Kibar site. In a refreshingly unambiguous briefing, the IAEA presented new uranium findings, doubling the amount of uranium particles that had been found by the time of the November 2008 Board meeting, and highlighted the fact that many of its questions and requests for access remain unanswered by Syria. The Secretariat indicated that Syria's late effort to show some cooperation by sending a last minute letter before the Board report did not answer most of the Agency's questions, nor did Syria agree to any of the requested IAEA access in Syria. Also new in the briefing was the first formal confirmation that samples from Al-Kibar showed the presence of graphite, albeit the Agency can draw no conclusions about whether the graphite is consistent with a nuclear reactor.

12. (SBU) Syria defended itself at the briefing by claiming to have cooperated with the IAEA and by sticking to its claim that the uranium found at the Al-Kibar was introduced via Israeli munitions, despite the Agency's refutation of this claim in the report and technical briefing. In the course of making this defense, Syrian Atomic Energy Commission Head Othman revealed that the building constructed at the Al-Kibar site after the reactor's destruction was missile-related. Syria also maintained that it would not answer any questions beyond its obligations under its comprehensive safeguards agreement and that it would no longer "accept" any information on environmental sampling. Coming to Syria's defense, Egypt and Iran discounted the Agency's findings and tried to shift the focus to the issue of missing imagery, and of Israel's attack in violation of international law. Like-minded countries, including France, Canada, Switzerland and New Zealand, asked questions that drew out the need for Syrian cooperation very clearly via the Secretariat's responses.

End Summary.

-----  
The Agency Makes Its Case  
-----

13. (SBU) The Technical briefing on Syria was delivered by Max Aparo, the Section Head for Operations B2 on February 24.

Aparo reviewed a chronology of events to date, including the original claims presented to the Agency that the destroyed facility was a nuclear reactor. The briefing also included a review of the Agency's information that "points to nuclear-related activities." Aparo reviewed the Agency's concerns from the November report, such as the size of the containment structure and of the overall building, the adequate capacity of the water pumping station, and the findings of "significant" quantities of uranium. (Comment: This was particularly important given the lack of progress in the IAEA's inspection since the November Board report (GOV/2008/60)).

14. (SBU) The chronology of events that was presented during the Technical briefing is repeated below:

--6 Sept 2007 Bombing of Dair Alzour site  
--25 Apr 2008 Agency receives briefing  
--2 May 2008 Agency writes to Syria requesting visit  
--2 June 2008 DG informs Board  
--23 June 2008 Access to site  
--3 July 2008 Written request for second visit and other  
alleged sites and for information and documents  
--22 Oct 2008 Sample results sent to Syria  
--11 Nov 2008 Syria responds to sample results  
--26 Nov 2008 Request for access to debris/equipment  
--24 Dec 2008 Israel rejects Syrian claims regarding  
source of uranium particles  
--17 February Syria responds to some of the questions in  
the 3 July letter

-----  
Additional Uranium Found  
-----

15. (SBU) New in the briefing was the identification of about 80 uranium particles from the samples taken from the June 2008 visit to Al-Kibar. This is twice as many particles as were identified in the November Board report, which was already described as a "significant" quantity. Syria intervened after the briefing and argued that 80 particles is not "significant" in the "half million tons of soil at the site." Director General of the Syrian Atomic Energy Commission Ibrahim Othman also claimed that Syria "would not accept" any more information on environmental samples. Safeguards DDG Heinonen dismissed Syria's attempt at downplaying the importance of this finding and quickly interjected that the Agency needs to fully understand how man-made uranium came to be at the site in Syria.

-----  
Syria's February 17 Letter  
-----

16. (SBU) The IAEA also identified for the first time details of the content of Syria's February 17 letter, which Syria stated was from February 15. In the letter, Syria reiterated to the Agency that the site was and is a military installation. The letter explained that the pumping capacity of water pumps at the river were to supply drinking water to a nearby village, an apparent response to a question from the Secretariat asking for an explanation for the capacity of the pumping station near Al-Kibar. Syria also responded to a question from the Secretariat regarding a Syrian attempt to procure graphite, indicating that high-grade graphite is routinely used in Syria for electrodes in one of its steel plants. Apparently in response to a similar procurement-related question, Syria noted in its letter that barium sulfate is used in concrete for shielding medical treatment rooms.

17. (SBU) Switzerland, Canada, and New Zealand requested additional details about the graphite noted in the letter, in addition to asking whether any graphite was found at the

Al-Kibar site. Heinonen provided the first formal confirmation that samples from Al-Kibar showed the presence of graphite, albeit the Agency can draw no conclusions about whether the graphite is consistent with a nuclear reactor. The Secretariat clarified that the graphite reference in the letter was with respect to a procurement question the Agency had posed to Syria. Othman interjected further that the procurement in question had never taken place, but that Syria had offered the Agency an explanation of why Syria would use high purity graphite.

¶18. (SBU) The Secretariat noted that the letter did not remove the need for further cooperation by Syria on granting the requested access to Syrian sites and providing the requested documentation and information.

-----  
Syria's Lack of Cooperation  
-----

¶19. (SBU) Aparo addressed Syria's lack of cooperation in responding to questions from the Agency. Aparo reviewed the chronology of IAEA requests and related events and concluded by noting the questions still remain unanswered and that Syria's cooperation is needed. Heinonen, later in the briefing, said Syria's cooperation is the most important factor in moving this forward. Aparo emphasized that no documents or supporting statements were provided by Syria to support its claim that the facility was a military installation. Othman, in his intervention, took the opportunity to remind member states that no one would provide secret military documents to the IAEA, and that inspectors saw the missiles in the building when they visited in June, which is therefore clearly a military building. Olli Heinonen responded that the issue in question is the purpose of the destroyed building, and agreed that the current building is missile/military related. Obviously in response to Othman's argument about the IAEA's need to respect the sensitive nature of Syria's military facilities, Heinonen pointed out that the IAEA had kept secret the fact that it had seen missiles at the facility; it was only Othman himself who had revealed the missile function of the new building.

-----  
Uranium Not Likely from Munitions  
-----

¶10. (C) Also useful was Aparo's review of why the Secretariat assessed that the uranium findings were not from munitions, further putting to rest Syria's claims that the uranium originated from Israeli munitions. Aparo noted that natural uranium was not used in munitions, and the uranium is typically depleted (DU) with 0.2 wt U-235. Other elements typically used in munitions (Ti, Nb, Mo) were also not found. Aparo said that larger fragments of uranium would be expected if the uranium was introduced via a munition. (Comment: The assessment Aparo presented was a direct result of the experts meeting that U.S. and other forensics experts participated in earlier this month.)

-----  
A Call for Access to Debris, Sites, Documents  
-----

¶11. (SBU) The technical briefing emphasized the need for access to debris. Aparo concluded that the information points to nuclear related activities that require an explanation. He summarized the Agency's findings thus far, including the low probability the uranium particles came from munitions, the findings that are not inconsistent with a nuclear reactor, and the lack of documents provided by Syria to support its statements on the function on the site. In an obvious effort at "balance," Aparo said the Agency was hampered in its activities by the late provision of information and the destruction of the site. At one point in a response to Syria's comments, DDG Heinonen intervened with an explanation as to why access to the debris is central to a

solution; noting that if Syria wants to settle this issue, access to the debris "is the only way to do it."

-----  
Syria Touts Its Cooperation  
-----

¶12. (SBU) Syria intervened first following Aparo's presentation (and many more times afterwards). In a departure from the reality just described by the IAEA, Othman said multiple times that Syria is and will continue to cooperate with the Agency. Othman proceeded to explain why it will not answer specific questions and categorized the questions into two types: those that fall under the its safeguards agreement and those that fall under the Additional Protocol, to which Syria does not adhere. No questions will be answered that fall under the AP. (Comment: This explanation came on the heels of Iran making the exact same argument during the Iran portion of the technical briefing (septel).)

¶13. (SBU) Othman said that Israel should be condemned for attacking Syria. Othman ironically called Israel's response to the Agency on uranium contamination at Al-Kibar inadequate, "Israel has answered with only a few words and no follow-up requested by the DG." He immediately followed this by reiterating Syria's willingness to cooperate with the Agency, saying that Syria responded to the Agency's questions in the February 15 (not 17) letter in which "all available information was given."

-----  
Egypt and Iran's Unhelpful Interventions  
-----

¶14. (SBU) Egypt's two interventions were both unhelpful. Egypt's first point was to highlight the fact that few graphite particles were found, and that the Secretariat should highlight in its report that this lack of graphite supports Syria's claim that the site was not a nuclear reactor. Heinonen responded that the lack of large amounts of graphite does not prove this because it is not known whether the graphite was in the building at the time of the destruction. Despite Egypt's objections that the graphite was "alleged" to have been installed, Heinonen said that there was not enough information to come to such a conclusion.

¶15. (C) The second point was a call for an explanation on the lack of imagery in the period immediately following the destruction of the facility at Dair Alzour (Al-Kibar). Aparo

said there were indeed no images during that time and that the Secretariat had no explanation for the lack of images. (Comment: This is different from what Mission has been told. Mission will follow up on this issue. End Comment.) Aparo added that that images are not taken everyday.

¶16. (SBU) Iran intervened twice, reminding the Board that the key issue is Israel's attack on Syria, which was a violation that should be sent to the Security Council. Iran later questioned the validity of the uranium findings by saying that the Agency should not have been in the site in the first place. (Note: IAEA inspectors were given access to the site by Syria. End note.) Iran further stated that the Agency cannot prove that the uranium was not brought in by outside sources, to which Syria's Othman nodded his head vigorously.

-----  
Like-minded Draw Attention to  
Syria's Noncooperation  
-----

¶17. (SBU) France asked if the Agency had received any assurances that the debris to which the Agency sought access was being preserved by Syria. Aparo said that access has been requested but has not been granted access to date, and

no assurances have been provided regarding the debris.

¶18. (SBU) Mission asked for the Secretariat's plans for pursuing the investigation given the impasse and whether the Agency was receiving adequate cooperation from member states. Heinonen responded by reiterating that with the "corpse" was gone, the Agency had to retroactively find clues to determine what was at the Al-Kibar site. Heinonen noted his appreciation for member states' help on providing procurement information. He said cooperation is needed from Syria, that this is most important. Syria also needs to schedule the meeting with the Secretariat to discuss the analysis of the environmental samples, which Syria has refused to schedule. The Agency needs to understand why uranium was found at the site.

-----  
Comments  
-----

¶19. (SBU) The Agency made its case (again) for grave concern in Syria, emphasizing even more strongly that Syrian cooperation is a prerequisite to closing the investigation. However, it was evident from the interventions that the same issues that arose at the November 2008 Board meeting will again be raised during the March 2-6, 2009 meeting. Specifically this includes Syria's claim that it is cooperating to the extent of its comprehensive safeguards agreement, the uranium particles are not significant and/or introduced by Israel, the focus on the imagery gap following the September 2007 destruction of the Al-Kibar facility, the late provision of information, and the call for condemnation of Israel for unilaterally bombing of the site.

¶20. (SBU) Although not Syria-specific, Iran's concerns about Canada's call for the release of the Iran report is an indication that the release of the Iran report will be an issue; making the Syria report's formal public release even more contentious.  
SCHULTE